

Secrets of Drought Tolerant Landscaping

Deva Luna ~ EarthCare Landscaping ~ 408-871-2792

Background

- Water may be the next “oil” - finite amount of water, projected population growth
- We currently get our water from rain (14”/year), ground pumping, reservoirs (rivers from snow in the mountains), Delta, State water project aqueducts (85% reduction in supplies already announced)
- 18% of all energy use in California is for transporting & treating water!
- Up to 60% of our water is used in landscaping, lawns use most of that

Lawn care

- Water audit (free “Water Wise House Call” from www.valleywater.org)
- Best Management Practices, such as fixing leaks, setting timers properly, checking for overspray, mowing high, grass-cycling, increasing watering intervals, aeration, adding compost & compost tea

Lawn replacement

- Reduce size to what you really use (even to zero) – rebates available
- Ground covers, meadows, herbal lawns, paths, low shrubs, etc.
- For professional help www.landscapestandards.com “CA native plant professionals”
- EarthCare’s “Natural Front Yards”, Middlebrook’s “Lose the Lawn”

Plant choices

- CA Natives & Mediterraneans, adapted to our climate without irrigation
- Hydrozoning – put plants with similar water needs together

Improve the soil – makes plants more healthy so they can tolerate drought

- Feed the Soil Foodweb compost, AACT compost tea,
- Don’t compact the soil by digging when soggy
- Don’t poison the biology with pesticides, herbicides & chemical fertilizers

Fertilize organically (or not at all) – slower growing plants use less water

Thanks for coming to my talk!

Deva Luna, Garden Coach

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Irrigation types and timing

- Drip vs. spray, longer & less often. Hand watering is okay- you pay attention.
- Early morning vs. hot windy afternoons
- After plants are established, water infrequently but deeply. Let surface dry out to encourage deeper rooting, increase intervals. Don't use the % feature on the timer
- "Smart" controllers are weather based, connected to a satellite

Mulch – moisture stays in soil, decomposes to improve soil, suppress weeds, can get free "arbor chips"

Permeable surfaces – Direct downspouts to soil or drywells, not to sewers

- Pervious concrete www.prettypervious.com,
- Decomposed granite and gravel
- Permeable pavers

Practices that will become more common in the future

- Greywater re-use
- Water catchment

Resources

Santa Monica comparison demonstration garden/garden

http://www.smgov.net/Departments/OSE/Categories/Landscape/Demonstration_Gardens.aspx

EarthCare Landscaping's low-cost front lawn replacement

www.naturalfrontyards.com

Going Native Garden Tour – April each year

www.goingnativegardentour.org

Yerba Buena Demonstration Garden

www.yerbabuenanursery.com

Freshly brewed compost tea at Lyngso Garden Materials

www.lyngsogarden.com

A wiki site for Sustainable Landscaping with lists of professionals and pictures:

www.landscapestandards.com

Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County

<http://www.mastergardeners.org/scc.html>

Lovely book for droughty plants (with pictures!): *Plants and Landscapes for Summer Dry Climates*, East Bay Municipal Utility District